

Learning to Recognize Beauty



Compilation Coommittee
Al-Balagh Foundation

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful,

Learning to Recognize Beauty

The world around us looks like a great artistic fair in which we find a diverse beautiful canvas and wonderful scenes. If we continue to look at some of these works of art, surely, we will see, for example, the view of a mother while she is shading her infant with her warm breaths, compassionate smiles and unlimited love. And, also, we will see the child, while he is nursing at his mother's breasts, winking and smelling them as if they are the most beautiful jewels in his hands. And once the child's looks of pleasure meet with the looks of his smiling mother, the beautiful scene will be completed.

Secondly, nature, which dresses its sweetest garment in its days of wedding – the days of spring – may only be seen as a green uniform, while the eyes of the poet discern the beauty of spring; a starting point of greenness in gardens, and parks which were suffering, some days earlier, from lethargy and depression. Therefore, bright greenness flows in plains, and between rocks, and trees beam with the colors of flowers, then, man feels the life flow and its beat, while receiving the salutations of spring which are wet, fragrant and cheerful.

Thirdly, the one, who prepares himself for prayer and gets ready for performing his ablution, and then faces *Qiblah* (prayer direction), saying *Allahu Akbar* (God is the Greatest), standing, reciting, kneeling (with the forehead touching the ground), glorifying and saying '*There is no god but Allah*', expresses nothing but a spiritual canvas from which flows beauty that stirs up tranquility, happiness and peace.

And there are those who hurry to meet Allah in Mecca during the days of pilgrimage (*hajj*) while wearing *Ihram* (donning the pilgrim's robes). They gush forth saying "*Allahu Akbar*" (God is the Greatest), and "*Labbaik Alahumma labbaik - labbaika la sharika laka labbaik - Innal hamda wa ni'mata laka wal mulk - La sharika laka labbaik*" (Here I am, my Lord, Here I am - Here I am, You have no partner, Here I am - Praise, grace, and the kingdom is for you). (You have no partner.) Their gathering of different races gushes forth like a white flood, circumambulating the Sacred House, rushing back and forth seven times between the hills of *Safa* and *Marwa*, pelting pebbles in the *Jamrah al-Aqabah* (the largest symbol of the devil situated on the outskirts of Mina towards Mecca), in one movement and one direction. All these look like a canvas having the highest degree of fascination, beauty, and greatness, the like of which, cannot be drawn by any well-known artist of the world.

Surely, the view of a mother, seen in the canvas mentioned above looks more beautiful if we look at it from the point of the mercy implanted in the depths of

her heart and all that she stores up for her beloved newborn child, and the kindness, sympathy, love and mercy that abounds for her child. It is the canvas of merciful beauty.

While the view in the second canvas is visible not only through fine greenness or fashionable flowers, or gentle winds or the murmur of water of dissolved snows, but also through the revival of life from its bed. Indeed, it is the canvas of a beautiful and green revival.

And the one who prays, in third canvas, expresses obedience to his Master and humility, supplication, glorification and confidential talk. It, also, portrays for us the picture of a Muslim who elevates himself and those around him with a beauty that is attractive, transparent and high. It is the canvas of spiritual tranquility from which flows beauty.

Finally, in the canvas of pilgrims, one color, one movement and one call are united during the time of ihram, circumambulation, walking between the two hills of *Safa* and *Marwa*, and the pelting of pebbles. Surely, it is the canvas in which light and shadow are harmonized and appears in the shape of saying *Labbaik (talbiyah)* for the call of Resurrection in which people will stand together before the Lord of the Worlds. It is the canvas in which we find beauty, and magnificence that fascinates the heart before our eyes.

There are many tableaux in the universal fair that cause us to contemplate on this Divine, peerless

creation. Each of these tableaux in this single and one creation looks like a wide window from which more beauty appears. It is the hand of the maker that masters the unique and colored creation.

“Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You! Save us from the chastisement of the Fire.”

Holy Qur'an (3:191)

Contemplation and thinking on the beauty of the universe are considered but only an enjoyment, and, the two doors of knowledge, be it Divine knowledge or universal knowledge. Thus, it was the right of that poet who was shaken by the view of spring to stop the owner of a car who used to spoil the land and tell him:

“O night traveler, stop for us, this is the nature, so that I show you the wonderful invention of the Creator.”

Indeed, there are too many people who have eyes, but do not see with them and when they see, they see only the outward surface of things.

The Almighty Allah says:

“They know the outward of this world's life...”

Holy Qur'an (30:7)

Because, among the disadvantages of life with which man of this era lives is to be acquainted only with its silent, beautiful and material objects which

keep him away from searching for the deep and beautiful things.

Let each of us ask ourselves the following questions:

- Since when have not I cast my eyes to look and gaze around the kingdom of heaven which includes a moon that glows and swimming stars in the blue, wide and vastness.?!

- Since when did not I wake up in the early morning to contemplate on the view of a beautiful sunrise; to taste the view of life as it opens its lids for light; how flowers evaporate in their branches; how the birds chirp and smell the birth of a new day?

- And since when did I not return to my self in order to gaze at one of Allah's blessings upon me; it being the only window through which I look over the world around me. It is through my eyes that all lens all beautiful views are collected and see what is above it and what is below it, but cannot see itself except in a mirror?!

- Among the most dangerous risks of our present time is that the material objects keep us away from contemplating on the views of the universe enacted with beauty to the extent that we read with a general reading and flip the pages of the book of the universe through its wide titles, while missing the details in the beauty of things which gives us impressions that have great psychological and ideological outputs if we perform them.

"...So blessed be Allah, the best of creators."

Holy Qur'an (23:14)

Learning To Recognize Beauty:

Man inclines, in his nature, towards loving beauty. Today, he expresses his love for nature through a canvas on the wall, or an artistic master piece resting on a shelf, or is impressed by the beauty of products whose engineers are masters in their creation and production. Indeed, his love for beauty never changes and he longs for casting himself into the heart of nature in order to shake off, from his burden, some afflictions of modern life full of noises and breathless movements.

But, we shall leave this issue as a feather in the wind and let it depend on chance and circumstances.

Surely, the need for learning to recognize beauty is not luxury as some people imagine, but it is an essential need. As one of us needs to educate his wisdom, his self, his soul and his body, he is in need of to educating his taste in beauty. Can we imagine the feelings of the blind when they equate night and day, darkness and lightness, and colors and shapes as one? Do not we seem blind ourselves?

Some of our young men and women may understand that the education of developing a taste for beauty is to enjoy only sensual beauty, while beauty is

wide like the width of this universe in which we live. It is not restricted to external views of things, nor it is only in material things. Therefore, it is said that all Islamic education is learning to recognize beauty. For instance, when you educate your self to truth, indeed, you plant a beautiful, fruitful and blooming tree and others will see in this, a good behaviour, and kind words which revive in their selves a real, and bright tree.

Learning to recognize beauty starts from childhood, therefore a child who opens his eyes and sees a mother with a shining face, elegant dress, nice words, and moves around in a house in which cleanliness utters from all its walls and corners. Such child finds happiness spreading in all directions as a result of the existence of a warmhearted mother and a kind father. Surely, the love of beauty will be implanted in the self of such a child and he will be clean in his dress, his behaviour, and in his look at things. The role of a mother in organizing and decorating her house makes us to learn the first lessons in recognizing beauty in an unintentional way.

Other factors, also, play a role in the formation of our growth of recognizing beauty. Thus, those of our friends who come down from houses in which only beautiful speech is heard, beautiful behavior is seen, perfumed breaths are smelled, nothing sensed except the beat of warmhearted hearts, surely such a friend will leave their beautiful impressions on us. Our teachers, who introduce us to love and sincerity, the

means of dealing with our friends and life around us, advices remain ringing in our ears forever. What we read in Allah's Glorious Book (The Holy Qur'an) and in the book of the universe, which is full of the views of beauty, surely give us an education in beauty which can neither be removed by days nor changed by changeable natures even if the concepts of people are changed, and in which they see ugliness as beauty and beauty as ugliness.

In addition, when the governments organize traffic, construct beautiful geometrical buildings, protect gardens and parks, decorate streets and general squares with different, colored lamps, build tunnels, pave ways and roads, take care of the cleanliness of cities, all these deeds participate in our education of beauty.

The same thing pertains to people who stand in lines to buy their needs or wait for buses, and those of people who do not often honk their horns, and guard the feelings and the health of others by not spitting on the ground nor casting their rubbishes, here and there etc. surely, play their important role indirectly in the education of beauty.

Two Kinds of Beauty:

Outward beauty – the discourse here indicates man's beauty – with which we are acquainted with at first glance may be conspicuous and dazzle our eyes, but there is another beauty which cannot be discovered by our eyes except after a period of time, or we see it through other eyes, and that is inward beauty which we can call the beauty of the soul or attractiveness or charm, and it is the one which adds to the bodily beauty, a permanent and splendid beauty.

And if outward beauty is manifested in a good appearance, cleanliness, elegance and embellishment, inward beauty surely appears in good characteristics, such as: Solemnity, cheerfulness, the beauty of declaration, wisdom and good morals. This means that there are two beauties: A material and sensible beauty represented by external association, and a spiritual and immaterial beauty represented by innermost essence. Of course, we do not intend to lessen the effect of outward beauty on the human self with which it becomes cheerful, but inward beauty is the one that radiates its splendor and magnificence upon outward beauty. Thus, beauty – as seen by psychologists – has immediate and rapid influence, while fascination assumes contemplation and close examination, and it

is possible to appear in the form of an attractive movement or gesture, or charming look, or fascinating smile, while attractiveness is not submitted to any measure. It is a secret thing which we discover with others and which affects us.

Indeed, the difference between the two beauties looks like the difference between artificial flowers placed in a vase on a table and natural flowers that ease the environment around us and spread delight in our selves.

But, here, let us ask this question: Is it not possible for a beautiful man or woman to be afflicted with a deformation in one of his/her organs as a result of a disease, or fire, or a car accident? Does this not mean that our outward beauty is exposed to being stolen and vanishing at any moment?! And even if we are not exposed to that, does not oldness one day attack us suddenly and absorb the glasses of this beautiful and tender young man? And the worm in a grave, at the end, will eat our faces filled with the water of beauty and nothing will remain of it except decayed bones?!

Indeed, inward beauty represents man's virtues, his outstanding traits, his goodness, his morals and his righteous deeds. It is they that maintain him in a permanent youth which neither weakens, nor becomes old, nor perishes even by death, because his virtues will accompany him with their brilliant beauty and shining faces until the Resurrection Day in the next world.

We should not forget this fact that a beautiful man or woman feel with psychological satisfaction about the shape or reaction which the Almighty Allah gave them, i.e., they are opposite of the ugly man or woman who may feel social embarrassment and perhaps incline toward isolation and introversion. As the beauty of shape may open the secrets of one's observed soul and be pleased with it, but this should be a motive for giving thanks, gratitude, and knowledge, nor a cause for arrogance, pride, and self-conceit.

Unfortunately, as a result of existing low view and expectations for values in our societies, a beautiful man or woman may be beloved for his/her outward beauty even if he/she is stupid, or having wicked morals, nor having any distinguished merit and skill. In the old times, Arabs used to say: "Before we see you, your name pleases us, and when we see you, your face pleases us, and once we talk together, your speech pleases us!!" Thus, the first look or impression is not enough to evaluate beauty because it is often deceitful.

Therefore, there is a beauty which cannot be discovered by mirrors, and it is the one called by psychology "the magic of personality" or personal magnet which gushes out from man's internal life and is represented in noble merits, and good qualities. In addition, we can say that beauty is balance and harmony among these elements, altogether. This means that the one who is beautiful both in his/her creation and being good in his/her morals and who

owns beautiful merits has surely obtained the two good advantages.

If this is the case concerning a young man, but the case differs regarding a young girl, because her outward beauty obtains greater importance. Nevertheless, we notice - as a part of the development of personality - that a great number of young women never depend only on their outward beauty, in stead, they try to add other accounts such as: Good morals, good deeds, good behaviour, good companionship, and good motherhood, because they realize that true beauty is the magic of personality and its attraction and not its outward surface.

Exploitation of Beauty:

Unfortunately, today, we see that a woman's beauty is exposed as a commodity in the markets especially in Western societies, by making her a thing or a commodity, and more than that, the exploiters present her body as a doll under different titles. Mostly, she represents a chosen secretary within the formal environment, or she plays her role as a girl of an advertisement selling their goods with her charms. In this regard, a proverb says: "*Beauty is an excellent seller.*" For example, a publisher in order to propagate his publications, makes her appear half nude in cover pages of various magazines and newspapers, or she is a girl of show and works as a fashion model and becomes proud of the way she walks in order to be prey for those who look at her. Sometimes, she represents an airline hostess, half dressed, in order to seemingly make a reception more distinguished, or a seller in a commercial shop in order to bring customers in, or she is an artist who reveals of body more than covering it.

The more severe affliction, among these imported conflicts from the West, is what is called the celebrations of international beauty queens in which girls show off their bodies for competition in dissolute

festivals broadcasted on the air live. We should not forget that beauty is Allah's gift to His creatures, therefore, there is no superiority of a beautiful woman against another one in her outward beauty, i.e., it is an object of competition.

Perhaps, what is noticeable in these competitions is that those who undertake and manage them or those of women who participate in them have observed that only shedding light upon female human flesh alone cannot be the sole measure for evaluating beauty. They, instead, began leading such synchronous competitions by choosing in the more intelligent and those who could answer quickly and, also, who could express their opinions and views regarding some issues which concern society, education and information. Such women participants even claimed, of course after winning, to have some abilities in this or that field, i.e., they felt that a beautiful shape - whatever chance it may have of beauty - was not enough if it did not include an essence of beauty.

Indeed, the exploitation of beauty in contemporary commercial markets – under any title – was nothing but a kind of trade of slave girls and bondwomen in old times. And if a woman understands the dimensions of this kind of repulsive exploitation that destroys her personality and they look at woman by her charms considering it the first and the last value, surely she will revolt for her dignity and honor and leave this infected condition without returning.

Perhaps, a close look at the causes of retirement of those women who worked in artistic circles, reveals to us an important fact that their retirement came after bitter experiences they lived through. And it happened that in a moment of awareness, they thought and evaluated their conditions that their artistic reality kept them away from the way of guidance and Shari'ah revealed by Allah for Muslims. They, after their retirement, completely changed their life, and lived in a state of spirituality and psychology they lost for a long time.

The Veil is not Prison:

The legal covering indicated by Islamic Shari'ah as *hijab*, does not mean an aggression, or injustice or a prison against women as propagated by the enemies of Islam. Indeed, they raise this issue, in order to make the streets a permanent theater for woman to view her charms; from work places similar to bedrooms, and from schools places to excite instincts. Covering, to which the Islamic religion calls to, and with acknowledgment even by those women who never experienced it, is one of the main factors which safeguards her social and psychological safety and chastity.

In addition, the veil does not give to the greedy and those in whose hearts exists diseases an opportunity to misuse women and girls; rather it permits a Muslim woman to practice her work in any fields of labor without any hindrance. Likewise, it makes a woman an object of esteem and respect especially concerning her other beauties such as: her talents, skills, intelligence, and the ability for achievement and creation.

Once, one of the well-known newspapers made an interview with some unveiled and adorned women announcers who mentioned, without any exception,

that they were exposed to molestation and annoyance in their work environment and public places. While some public opinion surveys, which were performed in some universities of Islamic countries, proved that those women who are correctly veiled are less exposed to such annoyances.

Islam, on one side rejects a Muslim girl to be a common commodity or a doll played with by the owner of low inclinations and permits her, on the other side, to practice her full freedom in adornment and having the stated appearance of dress and general neatness for her husband. This means that she should be a woman for one man and not a woman for all men, and to be chaste in the places of chastity, and adorn her self in the of adornment such as in private women ceremonies or in wedding ceremonies or in her own house.

Surely, a young girl who goes out to the streets or to schools or in the work place while being in the state of full adornment and exposing her body, may hear some words praising her beauty, but, in fact, these words are like food placed for fish to catch it or like grain which is placed in a trap to catch a bird. In addition, it creates a mood of psychological and sexual tension that causes some youth to commit various forbidding, prohibitions, and contradictions against morals, customs and laws for the sake of satisfying their instincts.

Such a girl, indeed, commits two kinds of sins: The sin of unveiling her body, adornment and exposing her ornaments, and the sin of seducing the young men and turning them away from their main vital concerns.

Another Face of Beauty:

It is noted that the Holy Qur'an never talks about beauty as a value and, also, never talks about it regarding women only, but talks about it concerning men, too. For example, the story of "Yousef (Joseph)", who fascinated the heart of Zulaikha, the Minister's wife who fell madly in love with the manly beauty to own it for herself for the satisfaction of her carnal desire. He was a beautiful young man in the highest degree of handsomeness and beauty to the extent that the women of the city cut their hands when they saw him appear before them at a banquet with his handsome, brilliant, and angelic face.

"Yousef", himself, never indicated to his beauty as a value so that he would not be afflicted with conceitedness due to his being the most beautiful among the whole inhabitants of earth, nor submitted to seduction by inspiration that he is beloved and requested for his beauty. Indeed, the Holy Qur'an talks about other beauties of "Yousef". It talks about his chastity, his adherence to Allah's laws, his faithfulness, his call to Allah, about his interpretation of dreams and his ability of running and managing the treasury, in order that we draw our attention to true values and real beauty which may annihilate the outward beauty. That which remains are these values

about which we think of rather than being worried about the handsomeness of Yousef or any beautiful man or woman.

Thus, the handsomeness – i.e. the beauty of creation – is Allah's gift to His servant, and man has no will in it. But good morals are what man makes himself and a topping from Allah's success and His guidance. This means that the sphere of the first beauty is narrow and limited, while the second beauty is wide, broad, and capable of development, enrichment, and advancement.

O! My dear young men and women, search for the other face of beauty.

Surely, you will see that all virtues, without any exception are beautiful and all vices, without any exception are ugly. We may differ in evaluating the beauty of a girl or the handsomeness of a young man because every nation has its own measures regarding beauty, and, also, because the outward beauty is proportional matter, but the nations do not differ among themselves concerning that love is beauty, forgiveness is beauty, chastity is beauty, goodness is beauty, kindness is beauty, truth is beauty, cooperation is beauty, generosity is beauty, bravery is beauty, humility is beauty, and benevolence is beauty.

Likewise, the nations do not differ among themselves concerning that lying is ugly, stealing is ugly, transgressing against dignity and honor is ugly, pride and tyranny are ugly, aggression against the

private and public safety is ugly, playing with or violating laws is ugly, disobedience to parents is ugly and deceiving is ugly.

And if we take a rapid tour in some of the holy sayings they will reveal to us the other face of beauty. Indeed, there are certain criterions for beauty about which people are either ignorant or do not pay any attention to them because they used to look at beauty only from the point of shape and the outward frame. Among them are:

1. The beauty of patience: *"Man's beauty is his patience."*

2. The beauty of veneration: *"Man's beauty is his veneration."*

3. The beauty of piety: *"The believer's beauty is his piety."*

4. The beauty of obedience: *"Man's beauty is his obedience."*

5. The beauty of avoiding dishonor: *"The beauty of a free man is to avoid shame."*

6. The beauty of satisfaction: *"The beauty of a rich man is contentment."*

7. The beauty of devotion: *"The beauty of benevolence is to give up gratitude."*

8. The beauty of integrity: *"The beauty of kindness is to perfect it."*

9. The beauty of work: *"The beauty of a religious learned man (Aalim) is to put his knowledge into practice."*

10. The beauty of distributing: *"The beauty of science is to spread and convey it."*

11. The beauty of wisdom: *"There is no beauty better than intellect."*

12. The beauty of announcement: *"A woman's picture is in her face, while man's picture is in his speech."*

Once a man asked the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (s.a.w.) saying: "What does beauty mean for man, O Messenger of Allah?" He (s.a.w.) replied: *"To speak the truth."*

In this regard, it is quoted that Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.) says: *"The best intelligence is the beauty of what is internal and what is only appearance."*

The following measures for beauty can be summarized from the above mentioned holy saying:

1. *Devotional Beauty*: This is that which is referred to the holy saying which talks about piety, obedience, avoiding dishonor and the harmony between secret and public.

2. *Scientific Beauty*: This is that which is referred to by the holy saying talking about acting with science, and the spreading of science, i.e., science should not be memorized only in breasts and hearts as wealth is guarded in closed boxes. Thus, *"The zakat of science is to teach it to those who do not know it."*

3. *Social Beauty*: This is the one mentioned by the sayings related to patience, veneration, and kindness.

An important point which should be mentioned here is that Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, is the Creator of beauty, and the Giver of beauty for both women and men, and will not place our shape and outward beauty into the list of our judgments on the Resurrection Day. A Holy *Hadith*, in this regard, says: *"Indeed, Allah will not look at your faces, nor at your bodies on the Resurrection Day, but He will look at your deeds."* Because, if He looks at our outward beauty, surely the ugly people, the disabled, the deformed, and the handicapped will protest and will not accept to be included in the judgment of what Allah never placed in their consideration!

Indeed, the Holy *Hadith*: *"May Allah bless a man who does a work and performs it in the best way,"* teaches us that perfection of a thing and its mastery is beauty.

In addition, the Holy Qur'an calls for many other beauties which should be perceived and followed as a way, if it is possible, like a good behavior and the best behaviour in the Almighty's saying:

"Verily, We have caused whatever is in the earth an embellishment for it, that We may test them (to prove) as to which of them is best in behaviour."

Holy Qur'an (18: 7)

And the best manner:

"...Repel you (evil) with what is the best, when Lo! he between whom and you is enmity, shall be as though he were a warm friend."

Holy Qur'an (41: 34)

And the best speech:

"And who is better in speech than one who calls to Allah and does good, and says: I am surely of those who submit?"

Holy Qur'an (41: 33)

And the best religion:

"And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah while doing good (to others)..."

Holy Qur'an (4: 125)

And the best salutation:

"And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with one better than it, ..."

Holy Qur'an (4: 86)

And, also, beauty came as a description for morals like a goodly patience:

"So be thou (O Our Apostle Muhammad) patient with a goodly patience."

Holy Qur'an (70: 5)

And kindly forgiveness:

"...so (O Our Apostle Muhammad) forgive (the people) with kindly forgiveness."

Holy Qur'an (15: 85)

And a goodly manner:

"...but make provision for them (believing women) and set them free in a goodly manner."

Holy Qur'an (33: 49)

And a decorous avoidance:

"And bear patiently what they say and avoid them with a decorous avoidance."

Holy Qur'an (73: 10)

"Once the Prophet Jesus (a.s.), with his disciples passed by a dead dog whose carcass stunk. The disciples said: 'Oh! How the carcass of this dog stinks!' Jesus (a.s.) said: '*But what white teeth it has.*'" In this saying, his disciples observed 'ugliness', while Jesus (a.s.) observed 'beauty'. In this respect, a proverb says: "*A black hen lays a white egg.*", and "*A black cow gives fresh white milk.*"

Indeed, sometimes it happens that we compare beauty to what we like and please and compare ugliness to what we dislike. This projective theory represents neither beauty nor ugliness. Because a beautiful one remains beautiful even if he/she does not

charm us, and an ugly one remains ugly even if he/she charms us.

Consequently, let us search for the other face of beauty, the real beauty, which brings happiness that cannot be brought by outward beauty. Thus, let us contemplate, together, about the Prophet Muhammad's saying:

"Seek your needs with good humored people, because they either fulfill or reject your need cheerfully. Perhaps, a cheerful man may seem ugly in times of need, and it may be that an ugly man seems good in time of need."

Beauty and Marriage:

As youth, we have the right to put on the list of our priorities an important, vital and social plan and that is marriage, and we have the right to state the qualifications that we request about beauty, too. But, we, sometimes, exaggerate in stating our conditions and qualifications forgetting that the woman who meets our conditions, she, herself, also, has some conditions that might not exist available in us. Because, concentrating only on shape and outward appearance makes us lose the other part of beauty which we call "attraction" or the beauty of spirit, and the beauty without spiritual beauty is not beauty, but an evil.

In this respect, a holy prophetic tradition (*hadith*) says: "*Beware of the green manure! Asked what green manure meant, he replied: 'A beautiful woman growing up in a bad environment.'*" Surely, such a woman is seductive in her appearance, but repulsive in her actions. Because, the one who is brought up in a deviated environment, surely will adopt some of the morals of that environment, with the exception of the one who is blessed by Allah.

Therefore, the Holy Qur'an warns Muslims against marrying an idolater woman or idolater man even if though they have the highest degree of beauty:

"And marry not idolater women until they believe; a believer bondswoman is definitely better than an idolater (free) woman even though she may allure you: and give not in marriage (your women) to idolater men until they believe; a believer bondsman is better than an idolater (free) man; even though he may allure you;..."

Holy Qur'an (2: 221)

It is a peerless beauty, which adds to a shape a beauty that cannot be found in many unbelieving beautiful faces and that is the beauty of splendor and glory in women, and the beauty of dignity and gravity in men. Hence, we know the reason why the Holy Qur'an emphasizes and urges marriage with a believing man:

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), has related from the Prophet: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: *'If a person of good character sends a proposal to your daughter, then marry her to him. If you do not, there will be mischief on earth and wide corruption.'*"

And marriage with a believing woman:

"Marry a pious woman, (or) your hands may be dirtied."

Thus, the Holy Qur'an calls us as Muslims to choose the woman with whom we harmonize and who

harmonizes with us in goodness, conduct, behaviour and faith:

“And the pure women are for the pure men and the pure men are for the pure women.” (24:26), while it forbids us marriage with all impure women: *“Impure men are for the impure men and the impure men are for the impure women.”* (24: 26).

And in order not to live in daily oppresses, martial miseries, and complicated problems which may end in divorce, Islam, from the beginning, warns both the young man against becoming a partner of a woman who is beautiful in her appearance, but wicked in her nature, and the young woman against being engaged with a young man who is handsome in his appearance, but wicked in his conduct.

A young man has the right to marry a young girl who pleases him when he looks at her so that he may not extend his eyes to other women. The same thing concerning a young girl in that she has the right to marry a young man who is complete in her eyes so that she may not fall into treachery. In spite of that, we draw the attention of our youth, male or female, that if we get married with a woman who has a small share of beauty or a man who has only a few shares of handsomeness, let us search for other features of beauty in the personality of the other side. Because, beauty is indivisible and it is the one in which all kinds of beauty, such as, the beauty of spirit, morals, face and body, exist.

Certainly, having a contemplation in choice for both sexes, protects them from falling into mistakes which may become difficult to solve or reform in the future. Love is not blind as has been said, but, concerning Muslim youth, male and female, it is conscious and clear-sighted which is based on careful study of a partner, otherwise, choosing the bases of beauty alone may make both the young man and woman review, in the future, their situation because they put only one condition at the beginning of marriage and that is a handsome appearance. At that time, a person blames no one except himself because he will discover in time, too late, that he never asked or searched for other qualifications of beauty and he loses them in the partner of his life.

A shape or outward beauty is required, but it is not the only condition in achieving martial happiness. In this beautiful and common life, there are various beauties other than outward appearance, such as, cordiality, love, mercy, familiarity, social relations, friendliness, dedication, common work for establishing a righteous family etc... So, if beauty misses us, there will be other beauty to which we look forward and it may happen that, because of it, we will be attracted to the opposite sex.

Clothes and Adornment:

In Islam, the purpose of wearing clothes is both for covering and adornment.

In this regard, the Almighty Allah says:

“O children of Adam, We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty;...”

Holy Qur'an (7: 26)

Clothes are considered among the means of adornment. Because Allah, the Most High, never wanted to cover our body only, but also, to show ourselves in a beautiful neatness which pleases the beholders without any extravagance and misuse.

Indeed, Islam urges adornment and considers wearing excellent dress, to perfume oneself and using jewels for women as recommendable. And if Islam forbids wearing gold and silk regarding men, perhaps, it is to point out man that his adornment is special, and luxury eliminates blessings, while it allows women to

be adorned with gold and others on the condition that she should not show off or demonstrate her adornment.

“And say to the believing women that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions and do not display their adornment except what appears thereof. And let them wear their veils over their bosoms. And they should not display their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or guileless male servants, or the children who know not of women’s nakedness. And let them not strike their feet so that the adornment that they hide may be known. And turn to Allah all, O believers, so that you may be successful.”

Holy Qur’an (24: 31)

Thus, Islam never forbids woman from wearing a special and diaphanous dress, or which describes her body, or any uniform. But it demands her to cover her body and not disclose it to others with the exception of those who are limited by the above-mentioned verse. She should not show her body except what appears of it, nor do any movement which attracts men’s attention to her adornment, otherwise, she lives like the same kind of pre-Islamic era of ignorance (*Jahiyyah*) though it appears in the name of Islam.

But, still a noticeable phenomena is spread in most Muslim countries and that is, warmly receiving and welcoming of fashions which come from abroad,

without any close and careful examination of what hides the incoming fashion. Because there are some fashions on which foreign words are written; some are harmful and others are nonsense. And there are certain fashions on which the story of the cross or its picture, are depicted. Some have an advertisement for foreign goods behind which may be Zionist companies. Others have pictures of foreign singers, actors, movie stars and other things which are famous today in the markets of fashions and which wants to influence the state of mind of a young man or girl with the personality of the owner of the picture and his method in life.

We, as Muslims, have our own identity, and customs and the fashions should match and agree with the instructions of our religion, and the category in wearing clothes and using adornment can be summarized in the following words: You are free to wear what suits you on the condition that it should be modest, and not a doer of evil to your religion and humanity.

“Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah, which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good provisions?”

Holy Qur'an (7: 32)

Surely, the youth, male and female, turning towards modern fashions and following innovations and conflicts may be a matter without harm, taking into consideration legal laws, but, not every coming

fashion should be welcomed warmly. It may be that our enemies are producing them in order to oppress our personality and morals and make us live in the state of disintegration without feeling its danger, particularly, those clothes, be it for men or for women, having psychological reflections for those who wear them. Have not you seen, for example, that if you wear military clothes, you would feel as if you were having military spirituality and the same thing, regarding other clothes, is true. Therefore, we should caution ourselves against drifting into such fashions in whatever its market throws for us and, also, against imitating it in all of its modes, otherwise, how offensive it would be for a Muslim young man to imitate some western womanish and perverted youth by wearing bracelets, necklaces, and ear rings. It may be that there is no forbiddance, legally, in doing that, but this causes a young man, who is supposed to have manhood in him, to appear in the form of a woman which disturbs his personality.

Hence, we can understand the legal cautions against wearing the clothes of fame and exhibitionism. The clothes of fame are the ones by which their users become famous following the idea that says "*oppose in order to be known*". A Prophetic saying (*hadith*), in this regard, says: "*Surely Allah dislikes the fame of clothes (dress).*" But, concerning the clothes of exhibitionism, the matter is related to one's intention. So, if one's intention of wearing clothes is to be proud over other people, thus, arrogance (pride) is forbidden

and Allah, be glorified and Exalted, describes the conceitedness of Korah (Qarun), says: *"So he went forth to his people in his finery..." Holy Qur'an (28: 79)* who was proud and arrogant and who used to walk on earth joyfully and cheerfully, this attitude left its negative impact on some poor people who wished to own the wealth of Korah:

"...Those who desired this world's life said: 'O would that we had the like of what Korah is given! Surely he is possessed of mighty good fortune!'"

Holy Qur'an (28: 79)

Indeed, once Allah's Apostle, Muhammad (s.a.w.), noticed in one of his meetings that a poor man sat beside a rich man and this rich man pulled his dress (aside) as a result of his pride, so, he (s.a.w.) turned to him, expressing his rebuke saying: "Are you afraid of being affected by his poverty?", and the poor man refused to take anything from the rich man as a compensation for his insult.

No doubt, beautiful dressing and adornment have two effects: The first is on the one who cares for his neatness and handsomeness, and the other is the one who looks at him. But it should be clear that extravagance in adornment and neatness is not considered a condition in evaluating beauty. It may be that simplicity in dressing, cleaning, ironing, and the choosing of a suitable color for the skin, is beauty.

When the Almighty Allah blesses His servant with a blessing, He wants it to appear on him:

“And the favor of your Lord, proclaim.”

Holy Qur'an (93: 11)

Therefore, on one side, the Islamic Shari'ah forbids a Muslim to wear the dress of the people of disgrace and humility which decreases man's dignity in the eyes of the people. On the other side, it encourages the Muslims to wear their best clothes in daily prayers, Friday prayers, the Two Great Eids, and general meetings of Muslims so that when others look at us they will be pleased with our appearance:

“O children of Adam, attend to your adornment at every time of prayer,...”

Holy Qur'an (7: 31)

Indeed, whenever Allah's Apostle, Muhammad (s.a.w.) received his guests, he used to dress well, reform his neatness and comb his hair. In this respect, He (s.a.w.) said: ***“If a man goes out to visit (see) his friends, let him prepare his self, surely Allah is beautiful and loves beauty.”***

But, nevertheless, the most beautiful clothing that remains forever, is the clothing of devoutness, faith and piety: ***“And clothing that guards against evil – that is the best.”*** *Holy Qur'an (7: 27)* It is the clothing which remains beautiful forever and is not afflicted.

The Epidemics of Beauty:

The beauty of a young girl or a young man, and with young girls it is more of what Allah has bestowed on them of His kindness and care and distinguished them with tenderness in creation, has more than one epidemic. While we refer to the disadvantages of beauty, indeed, we act in a way that if we know the disease, logic says that we should avoid it. Among these epidemics are:

1. Self – conceit: It is the vanity with which a beautiful man or woman feels when having a transcendental look at others, to the extent that they even see those who are below the level of their beauty to be less valuable and smaller in worth.

2. Concentrating more on beauty than good qualities: This means that they (who are beautiful) engage themselves with outward appearances more than contents as if an outward beauty, for some beautiful men or women, is a travel document to reach others without the need to be endowed with good morals. If a beautiful woman becomes satisfied with her outward beauty more than gaining other beauties, she lacks determination in obtaining virtues that add to other beauties.

3. Exceptional and intensive care for face and body to the extent that they spend long hours in search for and choosing the most beautiful and expensive dresses, adornments and in the hands of a hair dresser or in front of a mirror though it is a friend of every woman. In addition a beautiful woman may be fascinated with her beauty by wasting her time when in reality she can gain other beauties.

Also, we should not forget that there is another mirror that shows our evils and our unseen beauties and they are our true believers; men or women. In this regard, a Prophetic *hadith* says: "*A true believer is a brother of his believing brother.*" They look like mirrors through which we see both our good qualities and shortcomings that cannot be discovered by normal mirrors.

4. Obscenity and Indecency: Sometimes, beauty causes its owner – May Allah protect us against it - to give up chastity and throw her beauty, to be bitten, in the middle of a road; do not you think that it is possible to enjoy our beauty through lawful ways?!

Recommendations Regarding Learning to Recognize Beauty:

1. A sense of beauty sense is in need of education and learning. Therefore, let us read beauty in everything in detail than to have a quick reading which sees nothing from beauty except its general view. Perhaps, having to contemplate on a view of the beauty of an ant in its movement, striving, cooperating, housing, carrying its food, and its distribution among the colony will cause us to consider more.

2. Indeed, appreciating beauty makes our senses seem more fine and our treatment more warm. So, if we do not ask for this taste and develop it permanently, surely, it will wither, be sluggish, and die.

3. Surely different literary texts and various fine arts which increase our level of beauty taste, are filled with poetry, story, painting and acting, etc... because it raises not only our consciousness for things and our comprehension of values, but also, presents to us a spiritual food.

4. Let us work towards spreading beauty around us regarding what we write, what we paint, what we

do and what we build of relations in order to participate in adding even by a beautiful brick in beautiful and social construction. Surely, one beautiful (aesthetical) trace here and another beautiful trace there; a beautiful word here and a beautiful situation there; lighten a suffering here and growing a smile there; calling for goodness here and calling for guidance there can remove most of the ugliness implanted in our life. Thus, let us be among the makers of beauty and not among its consumers only.

5. Beauty has paths, so let us develop through its routes in order to reach its secret. It has windows opened towards knowledge – knowing Allah increases our connection with Him – and knowing of our selves increases our purification, and knowing of people increases our love towards them and, also, cooperating with them for the sake of building the most beautiful Islamic society.

6. The other face of beauty always exists, therefore, let's search for it. Because, there is beauty which cannot be photographed by a camera, nor be reflected by a mirror nor, be picked up by normal eyes. It is more beautiful than visible beauty many times. Thus, let's be accustomed to - as Jesus (a.s.) did – to locate what is beautiful, even regarding things that seem ugly.

7. Traveling among ancient monuments, museums, ancient castles, and archeological worship places is a tour and a journey in the stations of beauty which

bring not only an enjoyment and happiness, but also, they are considered as stations of contemplation and thinking about those who built them, inhabited them, and those who succeeded them and those who departed from them.

8. There is a dynamic beauty in various beautiful creatures around us. Indeed, to contemplate in trees, animals, heaven, seas and mountains, not only enter happiness and pleasure in the heart from the window of an eye, but has other beautiful influences. Mountains like nails of earth, seas are blue horizons, which call us to travel and dive through their depths in order to discover magical worlds filled with beauty and Divine invention to Whom is praised in the deepest depths. Trees in spring give the perfume of green hope, and the loyalty of a dog, the crow's rising early in the morning, the kindness of birds, the persistence of an ant, the cooperation of a bee, and the patience of a camel, all these together, are beautiful tableaux which cause movement, action, continuity, endurance; not only for a single contemplation.

9. Now and then we should go out of the throng of life and set ourselves free against this capture and leaving noisy atmosphere the city behind, throw ourselves into the heart of nature and have a joyful time in the world of our childhood full of beautiful innocence.

10. All moral virtues are beauty and all moral vices are ugly. To be endowed with moral deeds is an

everlasting adornment which man adorns not only in the present world, but also, on the Last Day, too. Giving up any fault even it be small, is an increase in the space of beauty which we want to be extended, accordingly. It is a step towards decreasing the space of ugliness which moves towards an extension in a world in which materialism governs it and in which the spirit almost disappears.

11. An outward beauty in a woman is necessary, but, it is, only one of the various other beauties she should enjoy. She ought not to stop at the limit of this beauty only and, as youth, we should not stop loving beauty only without searching for other beauties. Surely, there is magic, attraction and spirit for a class inside each of us. So we have only to learn how to take it out for lightness.

12. Indeed, the Holy Qur'an educates us in recognizing beauty. The following are some examples:

The intention of walking is beauty:

"And pursue the right course in your going about..."

Holy Qur'an (31: 19)

And lowering the voice is beauty:

"....and lower your voice. Surely the most hateful of voices is the braying of assess."

Holy Qur'an (31: 19)

And mockery is an ugliness:

“O you who believe, let not people laugh at people, perchance they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perchance they may be better than they...”

Holy Qur'an (49: 11)

Defaming and calling one another by nick- names are ugliness:

“Neither find fault with your own people, nor call one another by nick-names. Evil is a bad name after faith..”

Holy Qur'an (49: 11)

It can be said that whatever the Holy Qur'an orders us to perform is beauty and whatever it forbids us is ugliness. The Holy Prophetic sayings, as mentioned earlier, are wide, beautiful education. Thus, the Prophetic sayings urge us towards arranging our hair, cutting our nails, putting on perfumes, and avoiding malodors because they scarify the sense of smell. It forbids raising our voice or talking with bad words because they scarify the sense of listening. It, also, forbids eating or drinking in broken vessels, while it calls towards cleanliness, taking ablutions before prayer, and taking a bath (*ghusl*) so that we do not scarify our sense of sight. In addition are those of the Qur'anic verses which call Muslims to meet their friends and brothers with a cheerful face. In this regard, a *hadith* says: *“Smiling at the face of your human*

brother is a charity.”, and other verses are numerous which are included in the frame of recognizing beauty.

13. Beauty exists inside us, therefore, let us search for the hidden places of beauty in ourselves firstly, and then in others secondly. And the day in which we own beautiful eyes and beautiful feelings, one view will be turned into various views, and a beautiful action into pulsating movement and into weather in which all kinds of beauty breathes.

14. Outward appearances often seem deceptive. Sometimes, we may oppress an outward appearance behind which a precious essence is hidden, or appreciate an outward appearance that contains nothing but emptiness. In this respect, some proverbs says: *“All that glitters is not gold.” “Not everything white is flour.”* and *“Do not judge a horse by its saddle.”* Try escaping your enemy over long distances by choosing your horse just by the beauty of its saddle. It may well prove to be very detrimental. Thus, the beauty of a saddle is not an evidence for the strength of a horse.

All praise be with Allah, Lord of the worlds.



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